

PHOBIA



horror +++ headbanging +++ and more

**My Monthly
Favs**

X and Pearl:

See pages 38 and 46

House Of Wax:

Popsicles aren't the only
thing melting this summer

**The Burning vs.
Friday The 13th**

See page 27 inside

AND MORE!

**PHOBIA's
very first
issue!**



PHOBIA Magazine

**would like to extend our
thanks to...**

**Shawn S. for always listening to my complaints about
whatever wretched movie I saw that week was.**

**The loyal and unsung reviewers who are always churning
out opinions and think-pieces on the newest films.**

IMDb for the various film stills and shots of blood and guts.

**The creators and collaborators on the free open source
Scribus software.**

**Those that came before us like: Psychotronic Video,
Samhain, Rue Morgue, and of course Fangoria**

**And, you, the freakazoid who
picked this up**

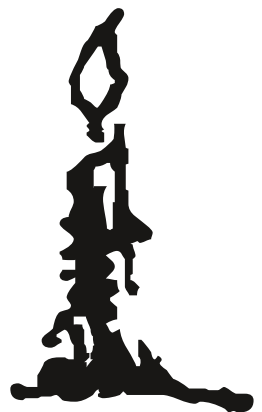


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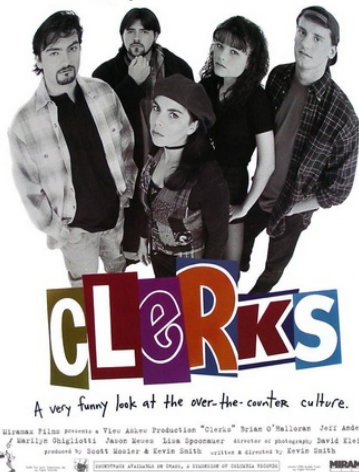
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2024 MOVIES OF THE MONTH

A collection of my own personal favorite films that I watched throughout each month of 2024. The collection consists only of movies that I watched for the first time, not strictly ones that came out this year or counting ones that I watched that month for a second (or third, or fourth...) time.

JANUARY 2024

Just because they
serve you doesn't mean
they like you.



CLERKS (1994)

"I'm not even supposed to be here today."

Directed by the now-famous Kevin Smith, Clerks was an underground hit. After it got picked up by Miramax Films and released in limited theaters, it grossed over 3 million dollars in the USA alone. And was well received by both audiences and critics. I agree with the masses on this one, as you can tell given that it stole my number one spot for January. I had heard a little bit about it here and there online for a few years and had kept it in the back of my

my mind for a while. It mostly came up on lists and suggestions for movies with similar plots or vibes to things like Suburbia and 2005's Waiting. I was in the mood for some type of comedy where nothing really happens, or the characters don't really do much. This was perfect. The first time I tried to watch it a year or so ago, I didn't know that it was shot in black and white, so when I pulled it up on some sketchy "free-movies-online-HD-etc" website I thought I had been punked and turned it off. I later learned that, yes, it was supposed to be in black and white and gave it a second chance. It was exactly what I was looking for. The movie follows a day-in-the-life of Dante Hicks as he and his friends, ex-girlfriends, and customers intersect at the Quick Stop convenience store. The dialogue was the best part, full of quick jabs and foul language, it even earned the film a NC-17 rating upon its initial release. It is an amazingly accurate, probably the most accurate I've seen, depiction of your average nobody's life. Very relatable and funny.

F E B R U A R Y 2 0 2 4

Lisa Frankenstein

This 2024 release was the first one of the year that I saw in the theaters. Just in time for Valentines Day, this horror-romcom was a lot of fun. I had a little hesitation at first, due to Cole Sprouse playing The Creature, but he did an amazing job grunting and moaning. The story is about a misunderstood goth-adjacent teen named Lisa Swallows, played by Kathryn Newton, who doesn't have many friends and likes to talk to the grave of a 1800s bachelor in her free time. After a fantastically green thunderstorm, our corpse-like friend re-animates and comes to Lisa's doorstep. Chaos, murder, and mayhem, ensue as they try to put him back together. Written by Diablo Cody, known for writing the cult film (and a favorite of mine) Jennifer's Body. and directed by Zelda Williams (yes Robin Williams' daughter), this was obviously going to be my top pick of the month. It also has a favorite actress of mine Carla Gugino, and a surprisingly likeable step sister character. Though I am a fan, it is considered a failure at the box office, after grossing only \$9.8 million. If you like anything campy, colorful, and violent, you'll love this.



M A R C H 2 0 2 4



The Passenger (2023)

I really loved this one. It (re-)ignited my mini-obsession with Kyle Gallner and reminds me that I need to watch more of his work. The plot is about our main character, Randy, played by the perfectly twink-y Johnny Berchtold, and what he first thought was a normal workday at your average shit-hole rip-off MDonald's. Then, after some harrassment from his coworkers, he watches as the loner janitor, Benson, shoots their heads off with a shotgun. Benson (Kyle Gallner) then holds Randy hostage and totes him around town to "face his fears". Violence and many moments of homo-erotic tension are the hallmarks of this movie. It's not all killing,

bloodshed, and kidnapping though, as we learn more of Randy's backstory we see how his trauma lands him in a situation like this. Similar to Fight Club in how it shows men's relationships to each other and the whole follow-the-leader schtick. Did I perhaps only watch this because Kyle Gallner is hot? Maybe. Was it an awesome movie that made me wonder if some co-worker turned killer could help me avoid therapy? Yes.

APRIL 2024



Immaculate (2024)

Sydney Sweeney, known for her role in Euphoria, stars in this pregnant nun horror film. I have not seen many of the nun centric horror movies that have come out in the last few years. But, mainly out of curiosity, I decided to see this one. I was originally going to watch it in theaters when it was released, but never quite got around to it. Instead, I turned to the ever-growing power of the internet so I could watch it from the comfort of my couch. This one shows Sister Cecilia (Sweeney) as she travels to the Italian countryside to join a convent. With a rough understanding of Italian and some optimism, she joins the crew. Things change rapidly when she discovers she is with-child. She is hailed as the next mother Mary. When she starts to question things, it takes a dark turn. This may have the visuals of an A24 production but it does not shy away from the blood. Even in the first six minutes an escaped nun is shown having her leg ripped in two. I watched this on the last night of April and was originally going to give the spot to Late Night With The Devil, but this one won because of the ending. Yes Cecilia! Kill that thing!

MAY 2024

The Stuff (1985)

The Stuff! Loved this, it was so much '80s fun. It is about this new food craze that swept the nation, the food being the titular "The Stuff", and the comedic battle to destroy it. The Stuff is this weird white goo, basically like the consistency of yogurt or Fluff, that is from unknown sources and is sold to the people of America as the new uber-healthy food of the year that you just have to try. We are introduced to the character Mo, played by Michael Moriarty with a delightfully bad southern-adjacent accent, and follow his investigation of The Stuff. We also meet a kid that saw it move in the fridge, and the lead advertiser lady. They eventually take over the factories and radios, and end The Stuff's reign. The movie was a fun sci-fi comedy that was very obvious with its critiques of consumerism and marketing. Some folks have said it would make a cool reboot in present times with the whole Instagram influencer trend, and I agree!



J U N E 2 0 2 4

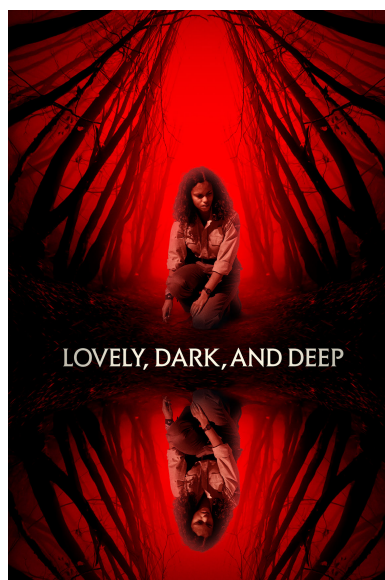
Pearl (2022)



You will probably grow sick of my ravings about Pearl, but I did really like this movie when I watched it in June. I rewatched 'X' as well, in preparation for the final film in the trilogy that comes out on July 5th, MaXXXine. All three films are directed by Ti West and star Mia Goth, who delivers a great performance in both of the ones I've seen so far. Anticipation isn't always a good thing though, it could lead my expectations to being a bit too high. Because I go on to do more summarizing on page 46, I will only give a brief synopsis here. It takes place in 1918 and is the story of the old lady from X, aka Pearl, as a young woman and her dreams of being a dancer, that drives her to become a murderer. It's not only me that enjoyed this one though, Martin Scorsese even said, "West and his muse and creative partner Mia Goth really know how to toy with their audience ... before they plunge the knife into our chests and start twisting. I was enthralled, then disturbed [...] But I couldn't stop watching."

J U L Y 2 0 2 4

As I speak to you now the month of July is not yet over, and there are many possible favorites to come. With big names like Long Legs and MaXXXine set to release soon, it could be anyone's game. Some on my itinerary for the month are below:



Come back next issue to find out my winners!

2023 HALL OF FAME

These are my personal favorite movies I watched this past year, 2023. Some are probably lost to the sands of my forgetful mind, but these are ones that memorable enough to be what I'd consider my favs of last year.

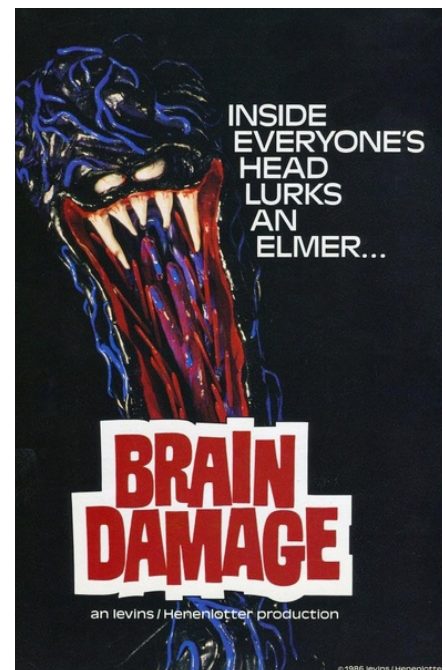


SAW X (2023)

Saw X, my beautiful and beloved Saw X. I would not be the horror-obsessed fanatic that you see before you today, without Saw X. Yes, I had been into the genre for years before, but the lead up and hype for this one was bringing fans back to the scene like no other movie that year. My normie brother even went to see it. I was so excited about the idea of a new installment in the franchise, even though I had only watched the first three, that I spent around a month binging the series to catch up. Funnily enough, this one took place between the three I had already seen. I also managed to see it completely alone in the theater. Much better than the eighth and ninth movies, much more accurate to that early Saw feel. Highly recommend!

BRAIN DAMAGE 1988

Brain Damage was Frank Henenlotter's second film, after Basket Case. The basic story of this movie is about a 20-something young man staying home sick from a party, followed by him experiencing a brilliantly blue hallucination and discovering he is the new host to an parasite named Alymer. His freaky, and very phallic-looking, new friend injects this weird blue juice into his brainstem through a hole in the back of his neck. The liquid induces euphoria and hallucinations, and allows Alymer to take control of the young man's (Brian, played by Rick Hearst) body to eat human brains. Of course there is a struggle for control as Brian learns of the parasite's eating habits. Along with the obvious themes of battling addiction, there is also some strange homosexual subtext. With Brian's lingering looks at a bodybuilder in the public hotel shower, and literally begging on his knees for Alymer's "juice", it's sort of hard to not notice. But that makes it even better! This movie is fun and has some cool 80s special effects, isn't that all you need to have a good time?



EVIL DEAD 2: DEAD BY DAWN

Fun fact, I can't eat Boom Chicka Pop's kettle corn popcorn without thinking of the first two Evil Dead films since I ate two whole bags of the stuff while I watched them. I'm sure you've heard of the Evil Dead franchise, even if you've only seen the commercials for 2023's Evil Dead Rise. This one revisits the events of the first film and puts our beloved Ash Williams (Bruce Campbell) through it all over again. With some slight changes in events and who shows up, the idea is the same, Ash has to survive the night battling demons and possessions after the words of the book of the dead are read aloud on tape. This iteration leans more into the comedy of it as we see Ash go a little mental. Well, I should say more than a little, he cuts off his hand and writhes around in agony on the cabin floor. Though the corpse melting scene in the original will always be amazing, the effects in this one were even better. I thought the deadite version of Ash was especially cool. It was critically-acclaimed and went on to spawn a TV show called Ash Vs Evil Dead and three more movies.



Saltburn (2023)



Saltburn was a last minute contender for the year, since I believe I actually got around to watching it in December. This one was trending for a while before its November release, probably because it stars Euphoria's Jacob Elordi and has a couple of more "out there" scenes. So, I had to see what all the fuss was about. Yes, it was good, I really liked the whole fancy rich people aesthetic of it all. It is mainly about Oliver (Barry Keoghan) meeting and befriending the affluent Felix Catton (Elordi) and getting invited to spend the summer at his family's castle-like estate. As the summer goes on, Oliver's obsession with Felix grows, hence the infamous bathtub-water drinking scene. Things change when secrets are revealed and Felix mysteriously dies after the summer party. Oliver is bribed to leave after Felix's sister, Venetia, dies by suicide. He returns later and inherits it all when the mother, Elspeth, dies. The movie ends with him dancing around full frontal naked to Murder On The Dance Floor by Sophie-Ellis Bexter. He also fucks a gravesite, so come on you gotta see it.

They can't all be winners...

I spend many hours and many days watching television and any random movie that strikes my fancy, and they're not all good. Dare I say, some are even bad. Terrible, even. Most of those that sink to the bottom of the barrel do nothing more to offend me than commit the mortal sin of being boring. Some just happen to catch me on a day where I am feeling cynical, but regardless of what they did to earn the losing spots, they all made it here. The last place podium, the kings of shit mountain. All the movies below have earned, in their respective months, the title of loser.

January: Cold Water (1994)

During the month of January, I had actually watched at total of 22 movies. Most of them were actually pretty good, this one was the stand out with such a low rating. It is a french indie movie about a couple of teenagers basically running away with each other. The soundtrack wasn't terrible and the actor that played the boyfriend looked sort of like a young Keanu Reeves. Other than that not much else going for it. Glad that it was my lowest rated for the month because the other option was The Silence of the Lambs, and that wouldn't be fair to Jodie Foster.

4.5/10 s

Would I recommend?

Maybe if you're into more artsy stuff.

February: How To Blow Up A Pipeline (2022)

Hulu has probably already forwarded my information to the FBI for watching this. No, I wasn't watching it for inspiration, I can plan my own bombings, thank you very much. I was curious and bored so I turned it on. It's pretty much all in the title, a bunch of activists try to blow up a pipeline. Don't expect any type of grand revolutionary revelations from this one, it's much more of a crime thriller than anything else. It was cool how they got a group with some variety, though. There's not really much else to say, it was okay, fine, average.

5/10 s

Would I recommend?

Eh, not unless you're like 12.

March: Sex Tape (2014)

Okay, I'll say this one almost isn't even fair, this was the month where I didn't have wifi for the first week so I had to resort to old DVDs. But, Jesus, this one was awful, it was straight up like watching a commercial for the new iPad the whole hour and a half. Even Cameron Diaz and Rob Lowe couldn't save it. I should mention Sting was the runner up, and that one absolutely sucks shit on eight legs.

2/10



Would I recommend?

No.
Fuck Apple.

April: The Endless (2017)

I was disappointed with this. I probably would have rated it higher if I didn't expect it to be better. It had been sitting on my list on Peacock for like a year and a half and I was finally watching it. The concept seems cool, two ex-cult member brothers return to the commune after receiving cryptic video messages and when they get there everything is the same. Basically like aliens and time loops. I don't know, maybe it was my anticipation but I just felt like it had more potential than how they used the idea.

5.5/10



Would I recommend?

No. Go watch Donnie Darko or something.

May: Texas Chainsaw 3D (2013)

You can see more of my thoughts on this on page 25 and a bit more of a summary, too. But, I will keep this part a little more complaint focused. Texas Chainsaw 3D isn't the most boring and lame movie that many of the hardcore franchise fans make it out to be. Yes, it is cheesy and that one line, you know the one, definitely shows the tone. I did not go into this film wanting to be blown away by the power of cinema, so I thought it was pretty much just fine. Kind of stupid, but fine. I literally only watched it for Alexandra Daddario so, I can't really be disappointed.

5.5/10



Would I recommend?

Not if you're a TCM fan, but maybe if you like dumb slashers.

June: Tourist Trap (1979)

I watched this because I saw some comparisons between it and House Of Wax, and yeah there is similarities in plot for sure, which you can see me point out again on page 20. But honestly, other than that it probably wouldn't even come up in conversation. It was pretty much just okay,

As I mentioned earlier, the month of July isn't over yet so, there's still lots of potential for me to be thoroughly disgusted and bored to death by whatever I watch this month. Seek out the next issue to find out which was the worst.

5/10



Would I recommend?

Maybe if you have a fear of mannequins.

SUMMER OF BLOOD

UPCOMING HORROR AND MORE THIS SUMMER

July:

5th to 7th- Days of the Dead- This weekend convention takes place in Indianapolis, and seems really cool. Their guest list has some major names like Brad Dourif, Costas Mandylor, Skid Row's Rachel Bolan, and a bunch more. No guarantee on who will appear but, if you're a local fan of the genre it would probably be worth the trip.

12th-Long Legs- This A24 horror film is one I'm especially looking forward to due to the awesome mysterious promotional material. Creepy and vague trailers plus, sending horror reviewers coded invitations to the premier, they've got my attention.

19th- Oddity- A recent discovery of mine, brought to my attention by an article from Rue Morgue magazine. Set to release on Shudder after its theater run, this movie is about a women who was murdered and her blind psychic sister coming back to get revenge on those she deems responsible, with an array of cursed objects.

August:

2nd-Cuckoo- The release date on this Hunter Schafer starring movie has bounced around for a bit, only making it more interesting. The trailer makes it seem like a must-see, and like it might actually freak me out.

9th-Trap- I do sort of feel like I just watched the whole movie after seeing the trailer, but it still seems fun. Directed by M. Night Shyamalan is a phrase that conjures up jokes about going to the beach that makes you old, though. But maybe, for Josh Harnett, I can give it a chance.

16th- Alien:Romulus- This will be the seventh of the Alien films, and is supposed to take place between the events of the first and second one. Not totally my thing but may have some cool kills.

23rd- Blink Twice- How have I not seen any promos for this one? It's directed by Zoe Kravitz and has Channing Tatum, Alia Shawkat, Geena Davis, and other big names. I saw this on a list of August releases, it seems like it will be a more trippy mystery version of White Lotus.

SUMMER OF BLOOD

LOOKING TO KNOCK SOME HEADS IN A MOSH PIT?
CHECK OUT THESE CONCERTS

JULY 2024

- **Live-7/4 to 9/15**-Please see this one for me, I had tickets when they were in town and never made it to the show because my shitty car's gas pedal stopped working. We were 800ft from the venue!
- **Creed, 3 Doors Down, Daughtry, Finger Eleven and others- Summer of '99 tour- 7/17 to 12/05**
- **Judas Priest and Sabaton- 5/16 to 12/12**
- **Foo Fighters, varying supporters like L7, Amyl and The Sniffers, Pretenders- Everything or Nothing At All tour- 7/17 to 8/18**
- **Kittie, various supporting acts- 7/12 to 8/23**

AUGUST 2024

- **Rob Zombie, Alice Cooper, Filter, and Ministry- Freaks On Parade tour- 8/20 to 9/18**
- **Megadeth, Mudvayne, All That Remains- Destory All Enemies tour- 8/02 to 9/28**
- **Slipknot, Knocked Loose, Orbit Culture, Vended- 8/6 to 9/21**
- **Primus, Coheed and Cambria, openers alternate- 7/06 to 8/24**- I may get tickets to this, since they'll only be like 20 minutes from me!
- **Rocklahoma Fest- many big names like Anthrax, Disturbed, Mastadon, Evanescence- 8/30- to 9/01**



"See Paris Die!"

Was one of the marketing gimmicks for the 2005 movie *House Of Wax*. And it's hard to tell if it hurt or helped, many of the stricter horror fans were not going to see a movie that had Paris Hilton in it, regardless if she was killed or not. Others went in theaters actually because she was promised to have an on screen death. So, it's sort of hard to say if her casting was a good choice or not, but I can definitely say it was polarizing and a great way to drum up some press back then.

Despite it's mixed reception, and it's enduring reputation as another shitty horror flick from the early 'aughts, I like it. More recent reviews seem to have a more favorable tone, so I'm not alone in my thoughts. Of course, I'm not going to say it is the most legendary movie I have ever seen, but if you're looking for a bit of nostalgic summer slashing and don't want to melt all alone, this is the one for you.





Our cast is stacked with 2000s names like Jared Padalecki as Wade, Chad Michael Murray as the troubled twin brother character named Nick, and his sister Carly who is played by Elisha Cuthbert. The group of college kids are driving out to a football game but, after realizing they won't make it in time,

decide to pull over and go camping for the night. They do some drinking and dancing and the next morning they realize the fan belt on Wade's car is busted. They also keep smelling this rotten death smell that's coming from the woods, and obviously have to walk towards it. Carly slides head first into a pile of nasty, rotting, slimy, deer carcasses (shown above). While freaking out, they meet the creepy local guy who offers to drive them to the nearby town to get the new fan belt.

The local drives them to the town of Ambrose, while they spend the ride getting increasingly more suspicious of him. The town is deserted when they get there and they interrupt a funeral while trying to find the owner of the gas station, Bo. He tells them he'll meet them afterwards and they go off to wander. They find the House Of Wax that was on all the tourist trapping signs they passed on their way in. After spending some time poking around and saying how the wax figures all looked so realistic, they return to meet up with Bo. He takes them up to his house, saying he had some fan belts there, while telling the couple the story of the abused boys that were the sons of the wax artist from the museum.



Wade goes inside to use the bathroom and doesn't come back out, he gets his achilles heel slashed and then knocked out. Carly begins to put the pieces together and realizes they're in danger. When she tries to escape, Bo snatches her and locks her in the gas station basement. Carly's brother and his friend Dalton, played by Jon Abrahams, grow suspicious and come to town to investigate.



Wade gets his body covered in molten wax by the brother of Bo, who used to be his conjoined twin and is now forced to wear a wax mask to cover his disfigured face. Nick fights off Bo after he hears Carly in the basement, and Dalton discovers Wade in the wax museum. He panics and tries to rescue him, leading to a chunk of his face getting ripped off, as you

can see above. Dalton is ambushed by Bo's brother, Vincent, and gets decapitated.

Paige Edwards aka Paris Hilton, and her boyfriend Blake (Robert Ri'chard) have a strip tease session and are then interrupted by Vincent, who murders Blake then does some more achilles slashing before javalin-ing a metal pipe through Paige's head.

The non-murderous twins discover the town is filled with wax-covered corpses, and that the abused boys Bo had told them about was him and Vincent. And that Bo had been manipulating Vincent into doing all the killing, to make his wax sculptures more realistic. They end up in the basement of the wax building and set it on fire. Bo is still chasing them and gets beaten to death with a baseball bat by Carly. Vincent (seen below) tries to get revenge and chases them up the stairs of the melting museum.



They battle it out in the wax-furnished bedroom, where reportedly the bed was made with a mix of peanutbutter and wax, and manage to kill Vincent. He falls into the pit of melting wax below them, and as the floor melts to swallow his brothers body, he lands on top of him in the exact position in which they were conjoined.



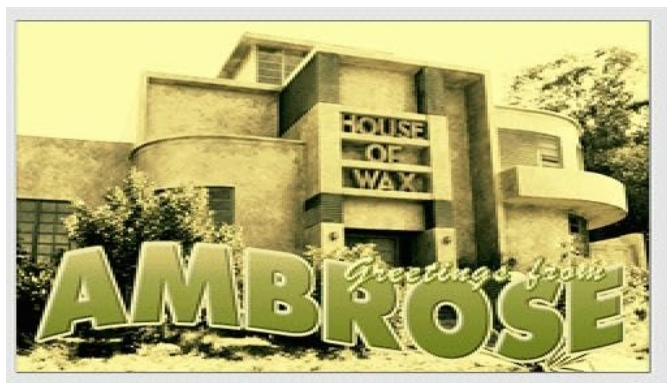
The rest of the building melts, in a very pre-modern computer effects way, and the smoke draws the attention of the local authorities. As they drive away in the ambulance, they see the man from the beginning waving to them. The sheriff says that the abused boys weren't twins, they were triplets.

Fun fact, the set caught on fire during production, resulting in a seven million dollar lawsuit against the special effects company, and the supposed cause was a candle. Weird, right?

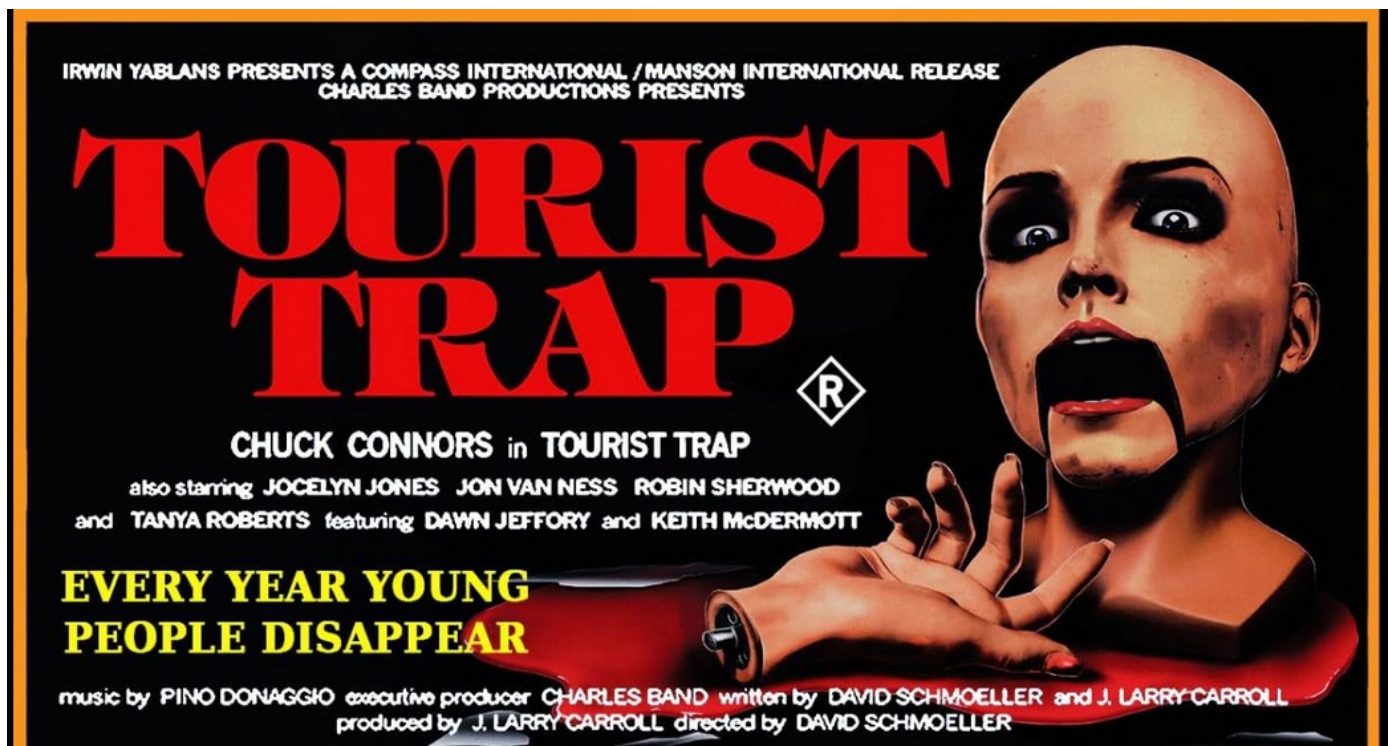
A redeeming quality in this movie, that I hope we can agree on, is the soundtrack. I feel like a lot of recent movies don't seem to have any cool music. Where's the shit they would play in Queen Of The Damned, or in Blade, you know? We seem to be lacking the cool-factor lately. Though, House Of Wax wasn't quite as stacked as those, it did have some notable bands like: Deftones, The Prodigy, Disturbed, Joy Division, and My Chemical Romance.

"Makes up for its idiot plot with a gallon of gore."

- Jamie Russell, on RottenTomatoes for BBC.com on May 24, 2005



At the end of the day, my thoughts on House Of Wax are pretty simple, it was fun. Not every movie ever made needs to be a cerebral circle-jerk, y'all are just haters.



Tourist Trap

The 2005 movie House Of Wax was actually a remake of a 1953 film of the same name, that stars the icon Vincent Price. The 1953 version was also itself a remake of a movie from the '30s. But, the Paris Hilton starred movie doesn't really share much more than the name with it's predecessor. The 1979 movie Tourist Trap is much closer in plot, a group of young adults have a broken down car and go to the nearby run down wax museum for help.

They obviously don't get rescued, and are chased around by a mad man in a mask that wants to cover them in wax and make them into creepy mannequins. But, in this one the killer also has telekinetic powers.

As you can tell, from the fact that it won my worst movie of the month in June, it's not really the best movie of all time. But it's not really the worst, either.

Not a terrible way to waste some time, and I think you can find it on a few different streaming services for free.



ROAD TRIP!

Inspired by House Of Wax to take your own doomed-adventure? Maybe try a little cinema action first. These are a few road-centric films, horror-adjacent and otherwise.



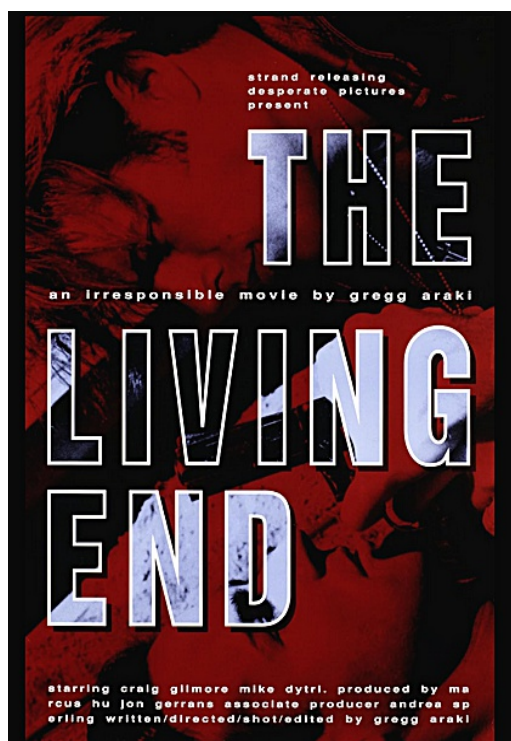
Bones and All

Don't be put off by it's "Horror/Romance" label on Google, this is an awesome movie. It stars Timothee Chalamet, which probably doesn't gain any points in it's favor I know, and Taylor Russell; playing two teenage cannibals traveling across the country to find Maren's (Russell) mother. They fall in love along the way, despite all my complaining about romance, it's actually a relationship I can get behind. Also has beautiful scenes of the American countryside. And a sympathetic portrayal of the characters' whole cannibalism-affliction. Seriously, I highly recommend it.



The Doom Generation

Everyone that has ever met me knows that I will rave about this movie any chance I get. I absolutely love it. It was my introduction to Gregg Araki and he instantly became my favorite director, probably of all time. This uber-90s dark comedy is about a couple, Amy Blue (Rose McGowan) and Jordan White (James Duval) who pick up a drifter named Xavier (Johnathon Schaech), who leads them into all kinds of trouble. The band Skinny Puppy even makes an appearance. Be warned, the ending is pretty messed up. But really, if you listen to any of my recommendations please let it be this one!



The Living End

Another Gregg Araki film that I love, this is one of his earlier works from 1992. It is the story of two young gay men that are HIV positive and decide to take a road trip. Sort of like a (more overtly) homosexual angsty Thelma and Louise. Like all of Araki's other films, it has a great soundtrack. Featuring bands like Jesus And The Mary Chain, Coil, KMFDM, and many references to other industrial artists throughout. Though it obviously deals with the harsh topic of AIDS, it was a refreshing take on the subject. I like that it wasn't all sad montages and gloom, and took their more fun nihilistic "fuck everything" motto as a starting point for getting into various violent predicaments. Hell, don't stop at this one, watch all of his work; you'd be just in time to catch the 4K remasters on DVD.



Wrong Turn

Wrong Turn is actually a film series that has seven installments, the most recent one being in 2021. Word on the street is that the first one is the only one really worth your time. The movie is under an hour and a half and is very straight forward, a group of college-age kids get in a car accident on some dirt road in West Virginia then end up being hunted by inbred cannibalistic rednecks. Yes, that trope does have a bit of classism and ableism to it, but a lot of horror villains come from similarly messed up subjects. This movie is kind of a basic early 2000s slasher but sometimes that's really all you're looking for. Would make a good double feature with House Of Wax on a hot summer night, when you got nothing better to do.

ROAD TRIP!

Living vicariously through the characters on film still not cutting it? Your cross country itinerary looking empty? Maybe you could visit these notoriously nasty places from Catherine Price's 101 Places Not To See Before You Die.

- * **The Shit Factory-** It's exactly what it sounds like, at the Inland Empire Regional Composting Authority, they compost waste. Excrement, bio-solids, sludge, whatever you want to call it. The re-purposed Ikea building is now a factory that processes human shit. Doesn't that sound like fun? I can almost smell it...
- * **The Body Farm-** Sadly, this one isn't open to visitors, there was obviously enough interest from the weirdos and freaks of the world though, as they have the "no tours allowed" disclaimer on their website. This is a research project from the University Of Tennessee's Forensic Department that studies the decomposition of corpses. In practice, it is basically a field of bloated, rotting, maggot-infested, dead bodies. Pretty cool!
- * **The Testicle Fest-** This one is open to visitors, it welcomes and encourages them. Or at least it did until it was shut down after 35 years. But don't fret, you can still get your fill of bovine testes down in Fredricksburg, Texas. That's right the celebrationn and consumption of Rocky Mountain Oysters lives on. Get 'em deep fried, boiled, or even raw, I'll try anything once!
- * **The Thing-** Not to be confused with the John Carpenter film of the same name, this road side attraction can be found in Arizona. Half gift shop, half museum, it advertises The Thing for miles along interstate 10. Supposedly, a mummy of a mother and child, you'll just have to see it to believe it.



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"Do Your Thing, Cuz!"



Texas Chainsaw 3D

You can't talk about murder and mayhem under the hot southern sun without at least a mention of the Texas Chainsaw Massacre films. I recently watched the seventh installment in the, what feels like, never ending franchise, and figured it earned a shout out. I should be honest though, I'm not really a big fan of TCM to begin with. My appreciation for the first film has grown since i watched it, as I learned more on how it influe-

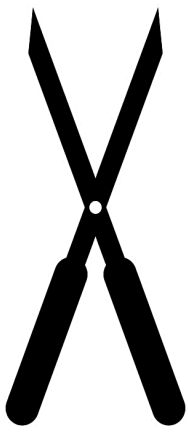
nced the genre and that it has earned the reputation as a landmark of horror. It is not without it's merits but, I prefer part two a bit more. Simply, for its overly 80s style and the introduction of the wonderful Chop Top, played by Bill Moseley (who charmed me with his portrayal of deliciously evil Otis B. Driftwood in Rob Zombie's Firefly trilogy). The reason I actually watched this one wasn't really due to interest in the story, but more so because it stars Alexandra Daddario, who I've always like seeing in things with her big beautiful blue eyes since I first saw her in the Percy Jackson series way back when. The story isn't all garbage though, it's at least a new take. It follows Heather (Daddario) getting a letter saying she has an inheritance from a long lost grandmother who has just passed away. She and her friends then venture to Texas to collect, and learn she has scored a nice big house. They picked up a hitch hiker earlier on their way in to town, who then attempts to rob Heather's new place. While the others are off exploring the town and being met with a stark lack of southern hospitality, our hitcher is met with an angry murderous Leatherface. This movie serves as a direct sequel to the very first one from 1974, and we learn the reason for the local's hostility is because they burned down and killed the members of the Sawyer family way back then. Leatherface does some misunderstood ramapaging, thinking Heather and her friends were back to finish the job. He chainsaws one in half, which was nasty to see (but Terrifier's vertical halving was way more narly) and another meets death via slashed tires that cause the van to flip. One is killed by police incompetence and Heather is dragged off by the townies. Leatherface hunts her down but realizes she's the lost cousin after seeing the Sawyer sigil on her chest, and turns his attention to the leader of the vigilantes, Hartman. Hence the infamous chainsaw throwing scene with the "Do your thing, cuz" line. Which was a line even Daddario wanted to cut, according to her interview with Collider. Yeah, this movie was sort of, well, just lackluster. I don't think it would get quite as much hate if it wasn't part of a franchise that is huge in the horror world.

A movie poster for 'The Burning'. The background is a dark, atmospheric landscape with a large, dark, jagged shape resembling a giant's foot or a giant's head looming over a camp. In the foreground, a man and a woman are in a lake, embracing and kissing. In the background, there are several wooden buildings, including a large cabin, and a sign that reads 'CAMP BLACKFOOT'. The sky is dark with a bright light source, possibly the sun or moon, creating a lens flare effect. The overall mood is mysterious and ominous.

**A legend
of terror
is no
campfire story
anymore!**

The BURNING

It will take you further than fear.



THE BURNING

VS



FRIDAY THE 13TH

To even dare to compare these two films could be considered blasphemy in the haunted halls of any horror convention, but under the threat of being burnt at the stake, I will do it. Where do I start? Anyone that has existed on this earth for the last forty years has no-doubt heard of Friday The 13th. Even the mothers and grandparents in your neighborhood can probably point out the iconic hockey mask that is introduced in the third film. That mask brands the non-severed arms and legs of countless horror fans and adds to its' reputation as one of the giants in horror cinema. So, to shit on any installment of the 12-movie franchise (with the recent announcement of another on the way and a videogame, as well), is probably enough to earn me an arrow to the throat.

But, to put it simply, I didn't think it was that great. I can appreciate the fashion choices and the reveal that Mrs. Vorhees was the killer after all, but it didn't really do anything for me. I think also the fact that the franchise is worshipped so much made my expectations a little too high. Perhaps it just caught me on a judgemental day but for now though, despite the fact that it grossed 59.8 million dollars world wide, I'm going to firmly say The Burning is much better than Friday The 13th.

If you're like me, not born before the year 2000, you may be wondering what the hell The Burning is. And I can't take credit for being some type of all-knowing horror god, I discovered this one while stalking the horror subreddit when I was looking for some more summer slasher inspiration. As I have been doing my research on the film, I have found some other reviewers that have boldly carved out the path ahead of me. Quite a few of them who have seen both FT13th and The Burning tend to agree with my sentiment, saying that when you compare the two, The Burning ends up on top.

The deciding factor to me actually getting around to watching it was the fact that it was on Tubi for free, and hey I can never say no to free shit. The movie I expected was much worse than the one I got. But don't just take my word for it, go forth and watch your summer camp dreams die.



It could be argued that the movie itself was a rip off version of Friday, given that they both take place at a summer camp and were released one year apart. But when the copycat version is better, that's not really something you'd want to broadcast. Of course we know which one won the battle in the '80s though, and has managed to have the staying power after all these years. The Burning has had a couple Bluray releases and DVDs though, so it may have a fighting chance in the hearts and minds of cult film fanatics.

The movie's opening scene shows a group of teenage boys at Camp Blackfoot, trying to prank their notoriously nasty groundskeeper by breaking into his cabin in the night, and waking him after lighting a creepy gimmick skull with worms and candles in the eye sockets (seen below). The groundskeeper, named Cropsy, panics and knocks over the skull which leads to him being engulfed in flames. The boys, obviously, scatter and flee the scene. Leaving Cropsy to burn.

The story then flashes forward five years after he recovers in the hospital and is set free, still all burnt up and scarred. After he murders a prostitute, for no real reason, he moves on to getting his revenge on this new batch of campers. I did see some complaints about the pacing of this movie, and they're not totally untrue, it actually takes quite a while for the whole murdering and butchering of the children to start after Cropsy makes his way to the camp. But, to me, that's part of what made it enjoyable. The parts where you get to see the characters doing normal camp shit adds to the fun.

One character in particular who added to it was Dave, played by a young Jason Alexander (known for his role as George Costanza on Seinfeld) who was the scene-stealing comic relief character in this. Another then-up and coming actor, Brian Backer (known for his role as Mark in Fast Times at Ridgemont High), played the main character Alfred.

The violence begins after the group embark on their overnight canoe trip to a more secluded island down the river. After telling the legend of Cropsy over a roaring



campfire, and scaring everyone, two of the older kids sneak off to go skinny dipping. The girl leaves and angrily goes off into the woods after some unwanted advances, and gets some garden shears to the neck for it. The counselors discover she is missing the next morning, and with her their canoes are also gone. Now they're all getting freaked out, so they decide to build a raft and send a group back to the original camp to get help. AKA committing the mortal sin by splitting up. What could go wrong with this plan?



This mistake leads to the infamous "raft scene", a massacre scene of all the kids on the raft, that was controversial enough in the UK to be cut in order to get it the R rating. But, when Thorn EMI accidentally released the uncut version, it earned a spot on the list of "video nasties" (basically stuff that was deemed to be graphic or obscene for home rental).

The Alfred guy is pretty much a voyeuristic little freak and follows Glazer and his girl Sally into the woods, to watch them get down and dirty. After some weak romance, Glazer heads off to get matches, leaving Sally as a prime target for Cropsy. Alfred sees her murder and runs back to tell the counselor, Todd. Todd is unconscious so he's of no help as Alfred is getting chased through the woods. The raft floats back by and the remaining campers head back to the mainland to get help. Alfred is chased into a mineshaft with Todd, who woke up and came to his rescue, and they face off with Cropsy. And it's revealed that Todd was one of the boys who pranked Cropsy back at Camp Blackfoot. Cropsy then meets his death by flamethrower, getting stabbed with his shears, and taking an axe to the head.

As the movie comes to an end, the police come and we flash forward to another set of campers being told the story of Cropsy around the campfire. A story that is still probably told to this day...

"Right now he's out there. Watching. Waiting. So don't look, he'll see you. Don't breathe, he'll hear you. Don't move, you're dead!"

The Weinstein factor

As much as I am singing the praises of 1981's *The Burning*, there is still one elephant in the camp cabin that I have left unaddressed: Harvey Weinstein was a producer and writer on the film. Weinstein is a convicted sex offender, currently serving time in a jail in California, and was accused by more than 80 women of various acts of harassment, assault, and rape. This sparked the #MeToo movement and was a very public and polarizing series of court battles.

With this knowledge, it does effect how you watch the movie. Yes, Weinstein was a big time producer with his hand in a lot of projects but, this is one I've seen. The main part of the film that feels different after learning of the crimes of it's contributor, is the actions of the main character, Alfred. At first when I watched this, Alfred's creepy actions didn't seem to be much more than that sort of "product of the times" nerdy-weirdo stereotype, but afterwards it does add a more distinctly un-ignorable creep-factor.

I mean in one of the scenes he watches an older girl shower. When he is caught he claims it was in an attempt to scare her and is (rightfully) told off for it by the other guys. And this seems like it was an attempt at the whole "he's not a perv, he's just misunderstood" trope, which was popular at the time. But again, knowing what we know now, it makes it seem like some sort of on-screen attempt at justification for Weinstein's off-screen actions. There's also the scene where he follows the older couple into the woods to watch them get it on, which seems all the more messed up now.

A point that was brought up by a reviewer called Analogscum, was that it does play with the common trope of having sex=death, that we see in other slasher films like *Friay The 13th*, but not in the same predictable way we always see. In *The Burning*, both of the young women who have sex scenes are killed, one after she rejects the advances of the guy and the other after she gives in. And that maybe, by showing that they can't win either way, it could give a glimpse into the fucked up logic of Harvey Weinstein.

I did enjoy the movie before learning this, so I will leave my previous thoughts on it unaltered. But, it is something to bring up when we discuss *The Burning*. All movies have the biases of their creators baked into them, whether intentional or not. As we all know, Hollywood is full of predators and the removing of them is a difficult process, meaning this will probably be a problem we will continually run into for a while. But that is also something that needs to be discussed, our responsibility as consumers of all forms of media and holding the creators responsible. Whether that be purposefully boycotting The Oscars because of their history or racism, sexism, classism, and more, or reminding people of the fucked up shit that the trending movie star of the week did.

You and me personally can't solve all the world problems by complaining about the insanity of Hollywood but, collectively, we have the power to make a movie bomb at the box office (or sore over expectations for the meme of it all, remember *Morbius*?) and send the message that xyz sucks. On the topic of responsibility, I implore you to boycott the theatrical release (and all other versions) of *Scream 7* in solidarity with actress Melissa Barrera and her speaking out in support for an end to the genocide in Palestine.



Crucifix popsicle, anyone?

What would you do if you when you say "Man, I could go for a popsicle in this heat.", you see me whip out one of these bad boys? Too bad it was only an art piece because, I'd gladly be lickin' on a Jesus-pop just for the novelty of it all. Where are the goth gals when we need 'em? These would go perfectly with your Addams Family inspired parasol and graveyard photoshoots. Get on it, people! Sebastian Errazuriz, the artist behind this piece, describes it below:

"2012

Laser-engraved wood and Holy wine

2-1/2 x 5in (6,4 x 12,7 cm)

Frozen red wine popsicles are distributed as cocktail refreshments to art gallery attendants, inviting them to "drink the Kool-Aid." The artist claims he previously carried the frozen wine popsicles to church, concealed inside a cooler, where they were then inadvertently blessed by the priest while he was turning wine into the blood of Christ during the Eucharist.

The holy blood popsicle and its uniquely designed cross stick is a comment from the artist on the close relationship between extreme religious fanaticism and religious bloodbaths throughout history."



"Don't sit on the drain!"

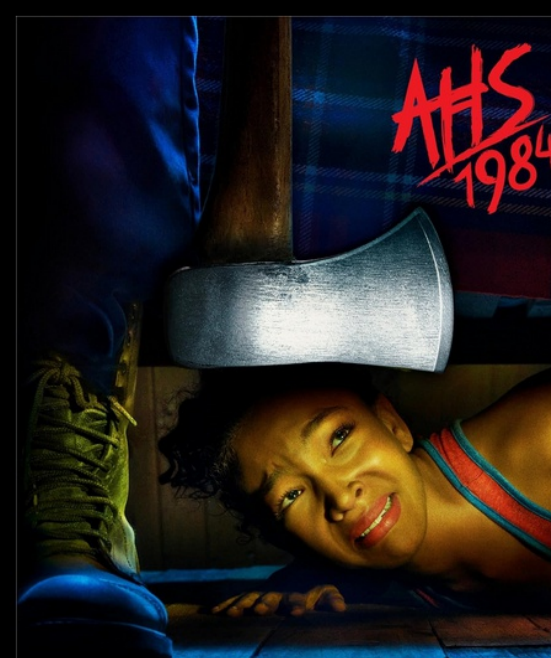
I'm sure you've all heard that ominous warning from the poolside on a hot summer day, whether it was coming from the mouth of an ill-informed grandparent or a cousin that believed everything they heard on the school bus. The urban legend had at least been around since I was a kid, and was probably birthed before I was. The story isn't really a story, more of a "I heard from a friend who heard from this guy whose cousin said" that if you sit on the pool gutter or drain it'll latch onto your buttocks and suck your guts out. What a nasty way to go.

If you don't have the guts (see what I did there) to test the theory out for yourself, you should check out the fourth Final Destination movie that came out in 2009. Their douchebag jock character drops his lucky coin at the public pool and has to go in to rescue it. But, in true Final Destination fashion, when he had taken a water gun from some stupid kid earlier and hid it behind a fence, it had flipped the switch on the pool filter to suction mode. So, when he goes down to grab his coin, he gets sucked down onto it. We get flashes of him struggling and the drainage system rattling as it goes into high gear.

Then, well it's exactly what you expect to happen, his intestines shoot out in a shower of blood over the pool deck. I'm not sure if the creators heard the story all the kids would tell and used that as inspiration, or if some dumb ass fourth-grader believed their older brother when he told them it was real, but either way it was fun to see my tween-age fears on screen.



Still got that itch for (or from...) camp? You can scratch it with the ninth season of American Horror Story, a fun ride inspired by '80s slashers with AHS's signature crazy ass twists and turns by the end.



'Sharp Objects' *cuts deep*

Gore and horror aren't only confined to the big screen, there are countless haunting TV shows that hold their own against the big names that we know and love. One of which boasts 3 nominations and a winner of the best supporting actress in a supporting role (in the made for TV category), Patricia Clarkson. None other than 2018's book to screen adaptation of Sharp Objects! The eight-episode murder mystery roller coaster, brought to you by HBO, is still being talked about online today, just about six years after its initial airing. I, of course, always seem to be lagging behind on whatever the hot new show is and "discover" them after the wave has come and gone. But this one had been on my list since just a few months after it came out. I had seen bubbling discussions and "hot takes" on the show in a few places online back then but never really paid too much attention. I had it pegged as just another dark CW-type teen mystery and didn't look too closely. But time went on and as my interest in all things horror grew, so did my willingness to revisit things that I had previously overlooked. Thanks to the enthusiasm of a couple Tiktok movie-critics and the beautifully colored gif-sets from years ago, I had decided to give it another chance. Some of the descriptions of the plot that drew me in were still a bit vague, though the ones that popped up did all seem to describe a sort of hot heavy humid air and weird southern gothic feel. Finally, around two summers ago, I gave it a try. Sadly, for some unknown reason I couldn't bring myself to pay attention and went back to scrolling mindlessly on my phone. Which is a habit I'm still trying to kick. I knew I would like the show, I could already see the strange summer vibes and my earlier hesitation at Amy Adams in the leading role faded quickly as her character drew me in deeper the second time around. Months and months (and a year) go by between my failed attempt at watching the first episode and round two.



It stayed on my list waiting for me, waiting for the right time for me to truly get invested. That time came around when I felt myself wanting to watch something dark and heavy like a long, hot summer. Again, I found myself scrolling and saw another post rightfully praising Sharp Objects, which this time talked about how there could be some sort of incestuous obsession that the younger sister, Amma, had with our main character, her older sister, Camille. That, along with the dramatic screen grabs and quotes, piqued my interest. It may be a little weird that that was the fan-theory detail that drew me back in, but it was enough for me to finally give it another chance. I was lucky enough to have avoided spoilers in all my online adventures, so I was going in almost completely blind.



I knew it was about some type of murder mystery, the sisters had a sort of strange relationship, and that wherever it took place had that stuffy small town vibe. I'm glad I waited until I was ready to fully pay attention to the story because, man, I was hooked! I watched the whole eight-episode saga over the course of one night and one day. It did feel sort of long and tense for a bit in the beginning, but once I had finished the first episode I had to see it out 'till the end. The urge to drop the major spoiler that happens in the last five minutes of the finale is amazingly strong, but I will try my best to resist. The plot follows Camille Preaker returning to her hometown of Wind Gap, Missouri to investigate the disappearance of a second young girl for her newspaper article. Without giving too many details away, as the show goes on, we learn that Camille has a troubled past with this town and her mother, who still lives in and looms over it.

That may give the impression of your typical investigative murder mystery-drama that can be found on any channel but trust me, it is much more. There were so many thoughts that were swimming around in my head for over a week after I finished the finale. So many details that look completely different now and changed how I thought of the whole story. Hell, I've been wanting to rewatch it already, just to see how much the last episode changes the context of everything we see before it. For the sake of the jaw-dropping dramatic reveal, I will have to cut myself short before I begin spoiling everything. There is still so much to mull over, the relationship between Camille and her domineering mother, the relationship between Camille and Amma, and even of Camille and herself. I could go on. To spare you the never-ending analysis I will leave you with this:

The very last line in the final episode, "Don't tell mama."

TERROR ON TELEVISION:

Tales of the terrifying, horrifying, and tantalizing that you can watch from the comfort of your living room (or wherever your all-powerful all-consuming TV may be).

Interview With The Vampire -

The second season of this show just finished airing, though I haven't caught up to it yet. It is a TV adaptation that is based on the Anne Rice Vampire Chronicles novels, which had also been made into movie form back in '94. I really liked this when I saw the first season, lots of blood-drinking and violent sex. These are definitely more gothic vamps though, so don't go into it expecting The Lost Boys type.



From- 2 Seasons -

This show's concept is really cool, it's a new version of the "everyone is stuck in this town" thing we see a lot. We are introduced to a family on a trip in an RV, who are trying to find somewhere to pull over for the night. They get stuck in this town that is in a weird inescapable loop, and full of human-like monsters that hunt at night. This show doesn't shy away from the blood and the monsters are creepy with their smiling faces. There are a lot of threads to the story being woven over the two seasons we've seen so far but, as they start trying to answer the questions I worry it may get the treatment of Lost, where the answer is something dumb at the end. There are rumors we're getting a third season in the fall.



Chucky- 3 Seasons -

Chucky was already campy and self-referential before the franchise made it to the small screen but, this show really amps it up. In my opinion, the first season is the best but, it's all fun. It is definitely a comedy though, I mean Chucky ends up in the White House in this most recent season. It's nothing deep and dramatic, which is exactly why I watch it. To see Chucky, the serial killer possessing a doll, kill people in increasingly more creative and messy ways. It also has the awesome Jennifer Tilly in it, and John Waters makes an appearance at the end of the season, setting up the plot for a fourth. There also may be a Chucky movie on the way!





Every serial killer lives next door to someone...



The tag line to this movie is such a good way to introduce us to the story, "Every serial killer lives next door to someone." With that we can already tell it's gonna be something interesting, so I have to give them props for that. But me, being myself, obviously did not read the cover for the DVD way back in 2019 when I saw it sitting on the shelf in my local Walmart. I assumed it was some knock off of Stranger Things and moved on. And I think that was probably part of the reason this movie didn't explode upon it's limited theatrical release, there was just a lot of '80s stuff getting put out at the time. It was very positively recieved by those who got to see it in theaters, and was listed on Rotten Tomatoes' Best Horror Movies Of 2018 list. When it was released on Shudder it was their seond biggest film premiere of 2018, as well. So, it very clearly has done well, but I think in the whole mainstream non-horror fan world it got grouped in with the nostalgia-bait that was (and is) booming. All this to say, basically, I'm late to the party. But, you don't have to be! I believe it is currently streaming on AMC+. But don't worry, it's not the eighties anymore and you don't have to wait for some older kid to lend you a bootlegged VHS, we have the power of the internet on our side.

Once you find your copy, strap in for, around two hours of, suburban bike rides and teenage conspiracy theories. But don't let the "your average neighborhood" atmosphere lull

Continued on page 44



"...One goddamn fucked up horror picture."

Is the Sheriff's theory as to what he thinks is on the camera they discover at the crime scene that opens Ti West's 2022 film, simply called "X". We get glimpses around the farmhouse, with a trail of blood leading inside and a body or two under bloody sheets, and are shown a naked corpse in the basement before we flashback 24 hours earlier to begin our story. The year is 1979 and we meet our cast of aspiring porn-stars as they leave Houston and head for that farmstead. The actual cast of X has a pretty good mix, Brittany Snow, Mia Goth, Jenna Ortega, Kid Cudi, and even Owen Campbell.



Campbell plays the pathetic RJ, the cameraman to their porno. He brings his "quiet as a church mouse" girlfriend, Lorraine, who is played by our up and coming scream queen, Jenna Ortega. Brittany Snow is the charming Bobby-Lynne. The crew stops for gas, and with a couple up-short shots as homages to *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, they continue on their way. As they get closer to the farm they pass a line of traffic, the Sheriff that will have to deal with their dead bodies in one day, and a bright red semi truck that hit a cow.

They drive on by and we get some cool shots of the brilliant red cow guts blending in with the red of the truck that hit it (shown below). Their tires squelch through some of that meat which, upon

my rewatch, I realized foreshadowed the death of another character we meet later on.

They pull in and are held at gun point by the old man, Howard, that didn't remember renting the guest house to them. After some tense words, and another detail that comes back later, they're led back to the guest house and well, they get down to it. While the others are getting down and dirty, Maxine (our main character, played by Mia Goth, who also plays the old lady, Pearl, in this. In full old lady makeup.) is creepily invited into the house by Pearl. Pearl does a lot of staring and makes them lemonade then shows Maxine old pictures where they look identical. The weird old lady vibes are off the charts, and it gets even weirder when Pearl reaches out a scraggly old finger to touch Maxine's exposed side.

Maxine rushes out when Pearl's husband gets home, as in full sprinting. That doesn't stop her or her determination to be a star, as she quickly is ready to do her sex in the barn scene. While, Pearl secretly watches in through a window and imagines herself in Maxine's place.

We are already starting to see the themes of the fear of getting old, of being undesirable, show up even this early in the movie. And, they're only reinforced with Bobby-Lynne's and Jackson's (Kid Cudi) acoustic rendition of the Fleetwood Mac song *Landslide*. After that, Lorraine speaks up and, to RJ's dismay, says she wants to shoot a scene in the movie.





Lorraine echoes the reasons that the others were saying on why they decided to be in the porno, saying she should do it while she's young and that she doesn't want to just shoot the movie but be in it. RJ does a bit of complaining, even though he had earlier advocated for the other ladies and their right to participate, and seems to be upset only now because it would be his girlfriend on the screen. He relents and agrees to film the scene, after a pep talk from their producer, Wayne.

RJ is still upset, or perhaps emasculated is the better word, and we see him pathetically crying in the shower in the middle of the night. I love seeing Owen Campbell in things because he always ends up with portraying a loser. RJ angrily decides to take off with the van and leave everyone stranded but before he can, he sees Pearl standing in the driveway. He thinks she needs help so he gets out, and Pearl starts putting the moves on him, trying to kiss him and touch him. He is very not into it and tries to lead her back inside.

She takes out a knife and stabs him, repeatedly, in the neck. And, she keeps stabbing him until she manages to sever his head from his neck. Gruesome! The van headlights are on the whole time and cast a red hue over her from the blood splatter, while she slowly dances.

Lorraine wakes up in the night and realizes RJ is gone, and after some urging, gets Wayne's help to go look for him. Wayne walks off to check the barn, still in his underwear, and Lorraine walks up to the house. Lorraine is led into the basement by Howard, who claims his wife is missing and he needs Lorraine to grab a flashlight.

Wayne hears noises and walks toward them, limping forward with his good foot because he stepped on a rusty nail with the other one, and his eyes line up with three holes in the barn wall. One by one the holes are cast in a shadow and he leans forward. Bam! Pitchfork to the eyes!



Lorraine walks further into the basement and Howard locks the door on her. Then she discovers a naked man's corpse hanging from the ceiling. Howard then goes out to the guest house and asks Jackson for help finding Pearl. Jackson opens the door butt-ass naked, with his comically large schlong showing up in his silhouette.

As Howard leads him off to the alligator-inhabited lake, Pearl sneaks into Maxine's room. Pearl gets undressed and lays next to her, then starts carressing her with RJ's blood still on her hands. Disgusting! Maxine wakes up and they're face to face.

Maxine lets out a terrific scream that wakes Bobby-Lynne. Back at the lake, Howard tries to lure Jackson into the water but just decides to shoot him in the chest when he fails. Bobby-Lynne finds Pearl standing on the dock by the lake, still naked, and tries to help her back to her house. Pearl pushes her in and calls her a bitch, as she gets eaten alive by the alligator. Pearl and Howard then reunite at the guesthouse and have nasty old people sex, on top of Maxine's bed. While she is hiding under it.

Maxine manages to crawl out from under the creaking bed and makes it to the van. She grabs the pistol from the glovebox and goes in to rescue Lorraine, after hearing her screams. She unlocks the door and tells Lorraine to be quiet, who responds very realistically with "Don't tell me to be quiet, I was locked in a dungeon down there!" and that she "hate(s) you all so much!" She runs out the door and is suddenly shot in the face, by a annoyed Howard who says, "I told her to stay in the damn cellar!"

Howard drags Lorraine's mangled corpse inside, which twitches, and gives the old man a heart attack. Pearl begs Maxine to help him, even though she has spent the whole movie trying to kill the whole group, and then switches to insults when that tactic doesn't work. Maxine tries to shoot her but upon pulling the pistol's trigger, finds out



the gun wasn't even loaded. Pearl takes this opportunity to now shoot at Maxine with the shotgun that Howard had held them at gunpoint with when they first arrived. Maxine is missed by the bullets, and Pearl is comedically flung backwards into the yard from the recoil. Again, now that she is the one lying in pain with a broken hip, she cries out for sympathy. Then when it obviously doesn't work she resorts back to the insults, saying Maxine would end up just like her and that she wasn't special.

Maxine gets in the truck, puts it in reverse, and backs up over the old hag's head. "Divine intervention. Praise the fuckin' lord." is the last thing the future star says as she drives off.

It is revealed that the televangelist that we see here and there on TV screens in the background throughout the film, is actually Maxine's father, when he finally puts up a photo of his little girl that got swept away into sin.

Throughout the movie there is quite a few details and moments that, when you watch it for a second time, foreshadow the coming deaths of some of the characters. Whether it be the obvious ones, like Bobby-Lynne and her violent death by gator that was alluded to with her intro scene, Pearl getting crushed under some tires like the cow, or the more subtle ones like Jackson and his ending coming from getting shot by a farmer which he specifically mentions hating during his time in the war.

This film really does make it's whole theme of wanting to be desired pretty obvious. Maxine declares her motivations early on in the movie, saying she "want(s) the whole world to know (her) my name. Like Lynda Carter or some shit." And her conviction to her dream gets even stronger as she survives the night.

Pearl also, even in her own twisted murderous way, still wants to be desired in that sexual fashion that she sees our pornographer crew "flaunting". 'X' does a great job of showing that old people want to be sexy, too. The jealousy really shows through in Pearl, and is explained more in the prequel film by the same name.

See more of my thoughts on page 45.



GOT YOUR CALENDAR HANDY?

Well, you better grab it because we got a lot to look forward to, kid. These movies, events, and festivals were announced recently and are buzz-worthy.

◆ **Louder Than Life 2024-** This Kentucky rock festival takes place from September 26th to the 29th this year. It has a massive line up that would probably take up the whole page to list, names like Slayer, Judas Priest, Korn, Anthrax, and many, many more. Seriously, check it out

◆ **Talk To Me 2-** This sequel to 2023's Talk To Me was a nice surprise. I really enjoyed the first one, it felt like I hadn't seen an actually fresh idea around teenage-partying-horror in a while. Was a fan of the world they created and how they incorporated the whole peer-pressure aspect. I had forgotten about how I liked the first one and am excited to see where they'll go with this.

◆ **The Black Phone 2-** This was a sequel I did not ask for, and when I was told of it's impending 2025 release, my immediate reaction was, "Wait, what? Didn't the killer die?". Which seems to be a sentiment that others are agreeing with online. Don't get me wrong, I thought The Black Phone was good, but I was under the impression that it was a one-off sort of thing. So, I don't know how they'll continue this story, maybe the Grabber will come back as a ghost? We'll just have to wait and see.

◆ **Nightbitch-** Another one that I am excited about, set to release in December of this year, this horror-comedy is based on a popular book by Rachel Yoder. I have yet to read the book, and will avoid it until after seeing the movie to avoid book-to-adaptation biases, but have seen it highly recommended in a few places online. I want to see it for the much talked about story of motherhood rage and canine instincts. Plus, it has the amazing Amy Adams as our star. Will probably be a fun one to go in blind to.

◆ **Fear Street 4-** A continuation on the Netflix Fear Street trilogy, number four is rumored to be based on the Prom Queen book by R.L. Stine in his Fear Street book series. Though I am looking forward to this, as I thought the trilogy was pretty entertaining regardless if you had read the books or not, I am a little worried it may end up a victim of the Netflix curse: starting something off strong then crashing and burning the minute it gets popular and has potential. I like the universe it's in, but worry if the creators try to go the franchise route, it may end up fucking with the story that came before it.



{Continued from page 37} you into a false sense of security, it is Not Rated, for a reason. The plot follows a group of four friends who spend the summer investigating and spying on their neighbor, a cop named Mr. Mackey, who they suspect is the serial killer that has been murdering local boys over the past decade.

Okay, for being Not Rated, there actually isn't that much blood and guts. In fact, there isn't really any blood until the second half of the film. As our main character, Davey, and his friends get further into their investigation, they escalate in their tactics. First it was watching from Davey's window with binoculars, then it was following Mackey on his suspicious late-night outings, and eventually it leads to breaking into his shed. They find a bloody t-shirt from the latest missing boy in his shed, and a creepy storage unit with tools, a car, and sodium hydroxide in it. This is all enough evidence, in their minds, to call in for the help of Davey's parents.

The parents pretty much laugh in their faces, and force them to all apologize to Mr. Mackey. And by now you are probably also starting to wonder if maybe this is all just a conspiracy, like Davey's parents said. Then Mackey comes over to sooth the teen's nerves by faking a phone call to the boy who was last seen, by Davey, in his being led down into his basement. But, that doesn't deter Davey, as he gathers the group for one last attempt to find undeniable proof.

At this point, if you're like me, you're hoping he's wrong. Armed with a camcorder, Davey and his friends venture down to the basement. And they find out the hard way, it's not always good to be right. With flashes of a bloody half-melted corpse in the bathtub, and the discovery of a surviving victim, that teenage innocence from the beginning of the film is shattered.

This movie did such a good job of portraying that certain type of suspense and fear that you would get as a kid, when all the urban legends and boogey men would come to mind as you walked home on those long summer nights.

It does a bit of making you think too, "What if those stories were true?", "What if I was right one of those times?". And it doesn't end there, Mackey comes back for revenge and leaves Davey with a haunting threat, promising that he'll be back one day. It was weird seeing Rich Sommer, who played Mackey, play a killer. I was used to seeing him in supporting roles that were normally dorky and comedic, so to see him play a serial killer almost made it creepier.

I was surprised that I don't hear much hype for this, since even though it is in the teen category (and totally would've scared young me); it still holds up as a fan of the more adult-oriented horror flicks. All in all, a great summer mystery and should definitely be on your list.



Suggestions from around the web



In my constant searching for new movies to rant and rave about this summer, I have found quite a lot of reviews and recommendations, but there is only 24 hours in a day. So, here is a couple of the ones that I never got the chance to knock off my list.

1. Midsommar- This movie came out back in 2019, and despite the fact that it has been like five years (has it really been that long?) I have not gotten around to actually watching it. At this rate, it'll be another five before I do. It still remains recommended and talked about online when the category of the season's horror comes up.

2. Jaws- I know, it's one of the first films that comes to mind when you think of beaches and everything but I simply haven't really been in a shark-fighting mood lately. I am honestly impressed that it has managed to have such staying power, like everyone knows the iconic theme. So, really I'm probably missing out.

3. Us- Jordan Peele's Us! I don't have a good reason for putting this off, in fact, I haven't watched it yet because it seems so good. Seriously, the trailer kind of freaked me out by itself. The whole doppelganger thing and then like they all stare with those big wide eyes, that's scary shit. It seems like it will be one of the movies that leaves you thinking about it for a while afterward. I'm a big fan of Get Out and Nope, too.

4. It Follows- This is sort of a funny one to describe, the main thing that always seems to come up is that it is basically an STD horror film. It probably has been dissected properly for its cool new take on the death by premarital sex trope, but it's funnier to say it's a movie about supernatural STDs. This one has some pool scenes and a few on the beach, was described by the Youtuber Matt Draper as "the last gasps of summer". So, I'm obviously saving it for a cold August night. This film also had a sequel announced recently, called They Follow, and is slotted for release some time in 2025. Gives us time to catch up!



'Pearl' is the prequel story to the events of 'X', and takes place sixty-one years earlier on the very same Texas homestead. It is about, you guessed it, Pearl. The year is 1918 when we see Pearl again, this time it is the beginning of her story, long before she was old and crazy. This time, she's young and crazy.

The film takes influences in style from the technicolor era of movies, like *The Wizard of Oz*, and remains bright throughout. We know, from Pearl's dying insults in *X*, that she had big dreams that went unachieved so, I'd say that this purposeful choice in cinematic style was definitely to highlight that. By having the backdrop of the movie be so picturesque, we get to see a bit of Pearl's escapist fantasy along with her.

The story starts with Pearl dancing in the barn and talking to all the farm animals about being a star and how "One day, the whole world's gonna know my name." A line that is repeated by Maxine and Pearl in both films. Then she stabs a goose that wanders in with her pitchfork and feeds it to the alligator in the lake, named Theda.

On this farm she is living with her parents, while she waits for her husband, Howard, to return from the war. The house is not yet falling into ruin and we get some nice shots of it, shown on the next page. She and her mother have a tense relationship which is only made worse by Pearl's fantasies of stardom and her reluctance to help her sick wheelchair-bound father.

The next day she goes into town, under the pretense of getting medicine for her father. She gets it, takes a swig, and sneaks off into the movie theater. After, she meets the projectionist in the alleyway, who offers her a cigarette and a frame from the movie. He encourages her dancing dreams and she rides her bike back towards home.



On her way, she loses the film clipping and chases it off into the corn field. When she makes it to a clearing and spots a scarecrow, she dances with it and does some dry humping on it, before dramatically screaming and rushing back home. Her mom questions why she was gone so long, and Pearl prays that night for any chance to be taken away from that farm. The following day we see Pearl's sister-in-law, Mitsy, who tells her about an upcoming chorus line audition that Saturday at the church and they plan to go together.

She sneaks out that night to see the projectionist and is again encouraged to chase her dreams, but her nice girl act starts to slip. Later, her and her mother, Ruth, (played by Tandi Wright) get in a massive argument that only escalates when Pearl admits she's going to the audition. I always see Toni Collette's performance in *Hereditary* brought up when people are discussing angry mothers, I'm surprised I don't see this scene talked about more often, I thought Wright did a great job. Though the film takes place in 1918, their argument is still today, the responsibility of being a mother

and all the regret it brings, the ungratefulness, and the reoccurring theme of jealousy.

Her mother gets pushed into the fireplace and is set on fire, then gets boiling water poured on her and pushed down the cellar stairs. Rough night. Pearl goes off to cheat on her husband with the guy from the theater. He drives her home the next morning, and Pearl tries to cover her tracks, which makes him suspicious and he tries to leave.

Pearl stabs him to death and pushes his car into the lake, then she goes back inside and smothers her father with a pillow. She hurries to the audition and meets up with Mitsy, who convinces her to go in first. With a wide smile, that creepily doesn't meet her eyes, she does her dance routine for the judges.

She is rejected, they wanted a more "All-American" type of girl. Pearl is a mess of loud snot-filled sobs. Mitsy takes her back to the house and tries to make her feel better by offering herself as a stand-in for Howard, and asks Pearl to share how she really feels. I did hear about this scene before seeing the movie, many of the reviews would praise "the monologue".



The praise wasn't un-earned, her confessions to Mitsy were wrapped in relatable desires to escape to a better life, and again regret and responsibility reared their heads. If you ignore all the murdering, it's almost a sympathetic backstory.

Pearl becomes convinced that Mitsy was the one who got the part, attributing it to her blonde beauty, and decides to kill her with an axe. She then dismembers the body and feeds it to the alligator.

She goes down to lay next to her mother's dead body and decides to try to make a life for her and Howard here. Or, as us modern folk would say, she settled.

She arranges the dinner table of the dead, with the maggot infested pig as the center piece, and the corpses of her parents as the accessories (shown below).

The film ends with Howard coming home from the war and Pearl greeting him with a painful smile, and saying, "I'm so happy you're home."

The credits roll and Pearl's face remains smiling back at us, with tears rolling down her cheeks. God, can you imagine what Howard was thinking? Surviving a war and then you come home and your wife went full psychopath. Really though, 'Pearl' can be almost summarized as the opposite of the line from 'X' that Maxine says like a mantra, "I will not accept a life I do not deserve." Despite the killing and chopping people up, Pearl is trying her best to get out, and then by the end she gives up and "accepts" this life.

Then sixty-one years later, she's still feeding people to gators, and is now parroting the very same things her mother said to her when she was young.



FOMO?

Catch these titles while they're still trending!



In A Violent Nature

I wasn't able to see this one while it played in theaters but, I did see it after it came out on Shudder. It's a slow movie by nature, we follow the killer from his perspective for most of the film, so there's a lot of walking scenes. But it still has a lot of buzz, in the Rue Morgue article by Andrea Subissati she even says, "In A Violent Nature's gruesome kill scenes rival Terrifier in terms of sheer brutality."

MAXXXINE!

Does this even need an introduction? If you've made it this far and still don't want to see Maxxxine, what are you even doing here? Other than Long Legs, this final chapter of Ti West's X trilogy is my most anticipated movie release of the summer.

The trailers don't give that much away but we see the survivor of the previous movie 'X', Maxine Minx, and her stardom as she has now made it in Hollywood in the year 1985. We got some bits of implied murder and mystery, even a shot of her outside of Bates Motel.

Yes, I have not yet seen the movie because it also didn't come to my nearest theater. But trust me, the moment it gets leaked on the web I'll be the first one in line. Also, it seems like it would be a fun '80s centric horror flick even if it wasn't part of a trilogy. Go see it!



FOMO?

Catch these titles while they're still trending!

The First Omen

The First Omen came out a couple weeks after Immaculate but the two films aren't related, even though they both happen to be about a nun getting wrapped up in some crazy ass convent. This movie is actually a prequel to the very well known 1976 movie, The Omen. Which I haven't seen but, it's probably better that way because I wouldn't want it to influence my thoughts on this movie by itself. I believe The First Omen is currently streaming on Hulu so, I'll probably put it on eventually.



Abigail



Abigail also came out in April of this year, and I thought, was pretty good. My main problem with it was that I felt like the trailer gave too much away. Of course, I get that the whole point of their playing up of the fact that Abigail was a little girl vampire, was to get more people to see it. But, I feel like the reveal scene would've been way more exciting if they hadn't literally played it in every commercial. There are a couple twists that are still in it, so don't write it off all together.. I did also really like how they just went fully in on the bloody vampire deaths, like it was a scene out of True Blood. I believe this is one of Angus Cloud's last films, as he passed away in July of 2023. Don't take this one too seriously and you'll have fun.

What am I listening to?



Pentagram

Currently, I am trying to catch up on my long, long, long, list of music and band recommendations and have finally made it to Pentagram. This band comes up a lot when people talk about doom metal that is in the same vein as Black Sabbath. I can see the comparison, they do have a similar sound. Even though I haven't yet listened to most of their discography, I do like what I've heard so far.

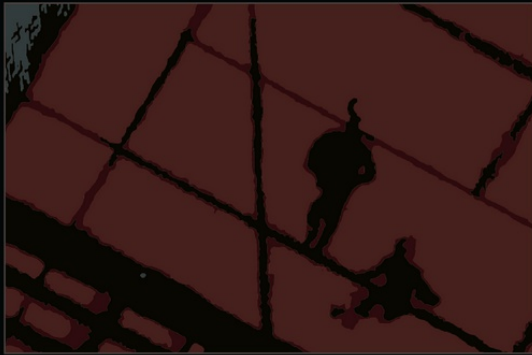
Seether

I'm returning to my roots! I used to hear Seether on the radio all the time as a kid, just never knew their name. My friend went to their concert a couple months ago and re-awakened my interest in 'em, and in the whole 2000s rock genre that I have been neglecting lately. Again, I am still no expert on all their albums or anything like that, but they used to have hit after hit on the radio way back when and I still remember all the words.



What am I listening to?

- WHILE I DISAPPEAR -



This Cold Night

I'm a strong hater of Spotify but still use it from time to time, and there is where I was introduced to This Cold Night. Their sound mainly falls under a few categories, like post-punk, dark wave, coldwave, and whatever other pretentious sounding word you want to add. Black Cathedral is a great song to pretend you're a vampire to but, you could probably say that about any goth song with synths and bass. If you do check him out though, use Bandcamp, fuck Spotify.

Fangoria's Colors Of The Dark

I have only recently hopped on the podcast train, spent a long time avoiding them because they reminded me of Instagram wannabe health gurus and the racist tinfoil-hat wearing conspiracy nuts. But, I decided to give them a try, and have found that I really enjoy this one. They definitely seem to have many more fingers on the pulse of the horror world than me, they're always suggesting movies that I've never even heard of. I believe they are on hiatus for a couple more weeks, which would give you plenty of time to get caught up.



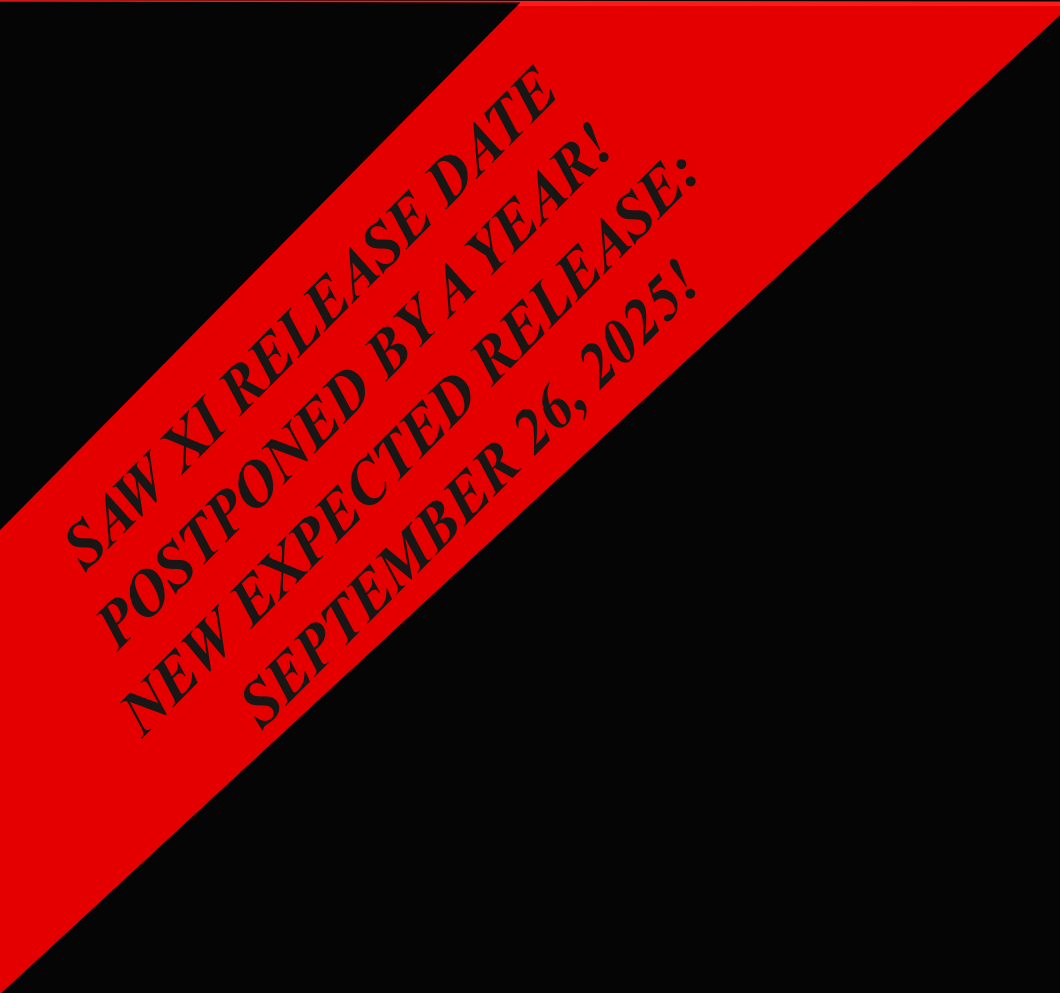
YOU GOT SOMETHING TO SAY, PUNK?!

Are you dying to rip us a new one? Do you think my opinions on cinema are the worst piles of bullshit you've ever read? Do you want to voice your own thoughts on your current obsession?

**Get in touch with us at:
PhobiaMag@protonmail.com**

Keep an eye out for the next issue!

And, no there is not a physical address yet, as I know some of you freaks would be sending weird shit Jared Leto Joker style.



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